

Exhibit A
(Redacted Character Letters)

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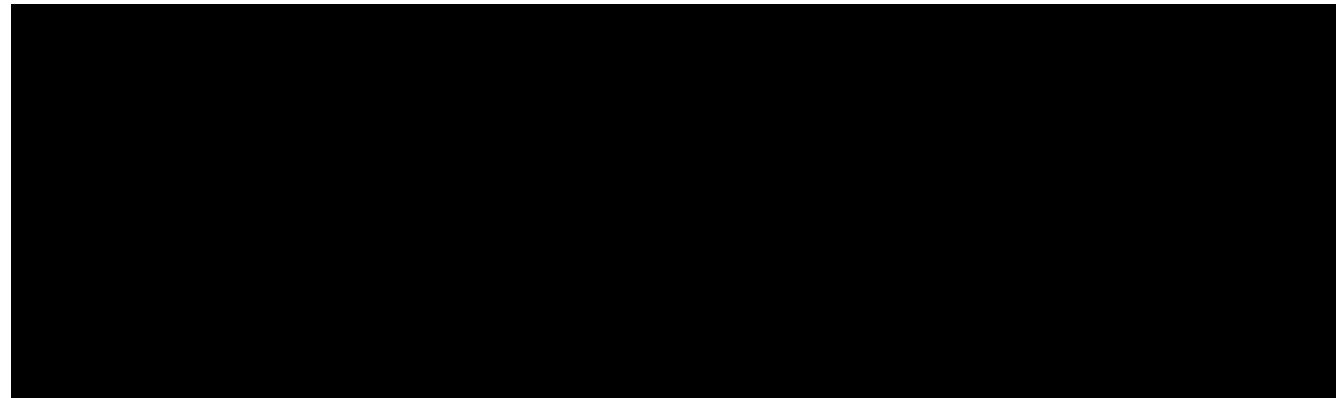
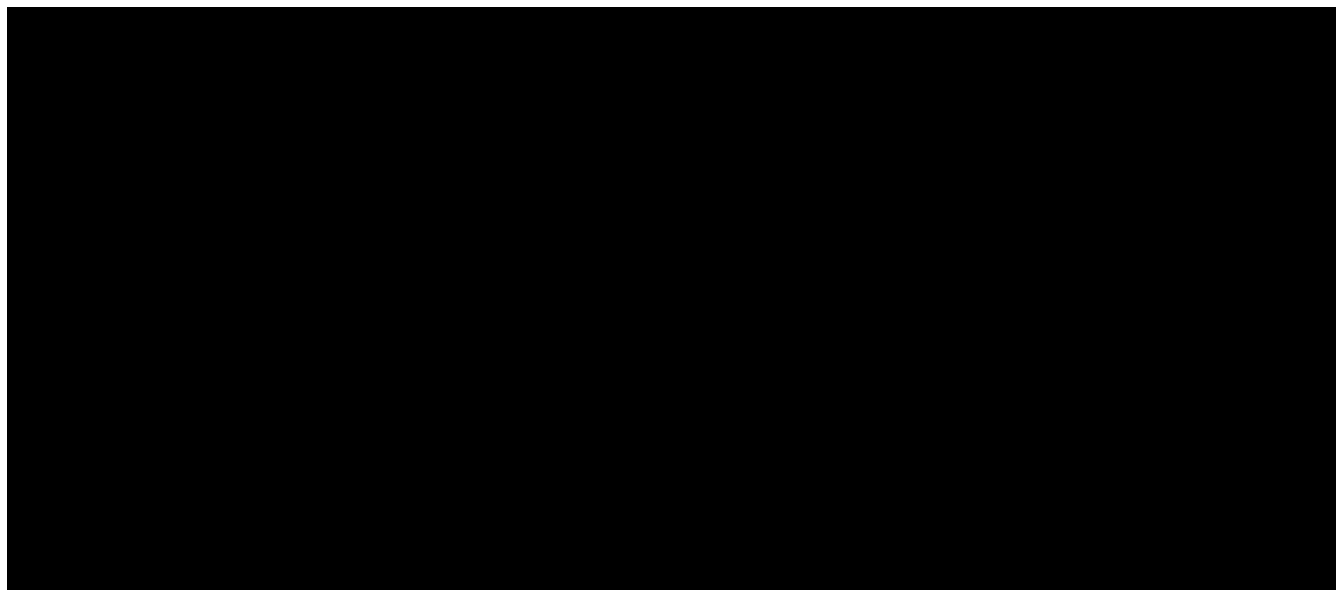
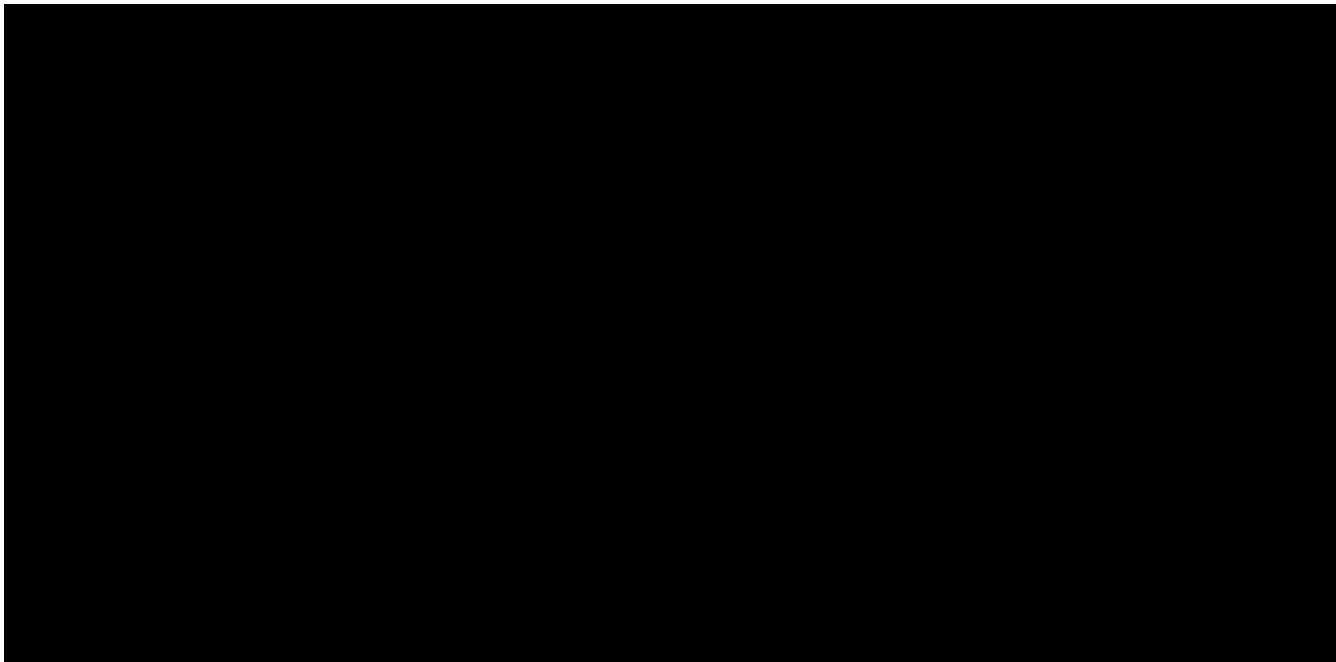
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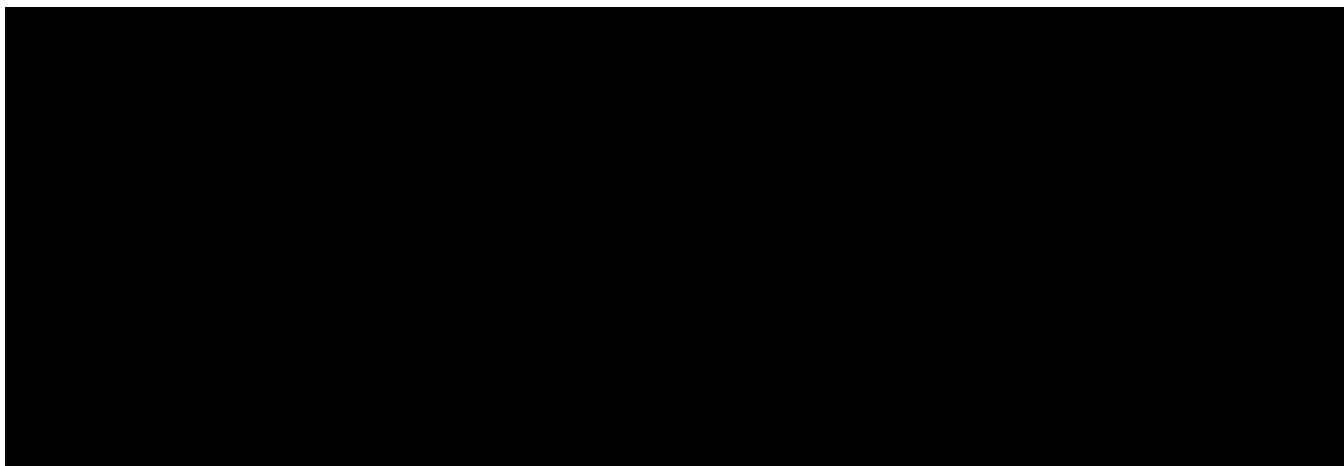
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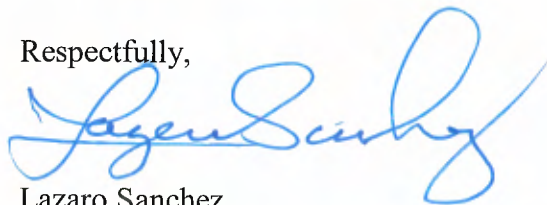
[REDACTED]

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Your Honor, Judge Gergel:

My name is Lazaro Sanchez and I am writing this letter on behalf of Russell Laffitte. I have known Russell for twenty-five years. My family leases land nearby Russell's home in Estill and we are grateful to have found such a kind neighbor in him. Our families get together about fifteen or twenty times a year, always for Thanksgiving, and enjoy one another's company, even hunting together some. My family and I actually live in Miami so we are not always around to check on our land in Estill. Russell has always offered to check on things for us and even offered to mow the grass for us and other helpful things like that. He even calls in the winter to make sure we have the pipes covered so they don't freeze and burst. I've always known Russell to be a good and kind person. I would respectfully ask the court to show him mercy. He means so much to my family.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lazaro Sanchez", is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lazaro Sanchez

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Dear Judge Gergel,

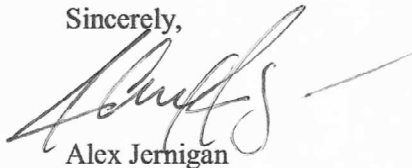
My name is Alex Jernigan. I initially met Russell in a professional capacity, and we have now known each other for roughly 14 years.

I lost my son in 2014. During that time, I only knew Russell in a professional capacity, as I live six hours away. However, he was an avid reader, and he learned of my son's passing by reading the regional newspaper. He called me immediately, and he continued calling me monthly for one to two years after to check in on me. During that time, he became like family to me, and he has continued to be one of my best friends. Our families have spent a lot of time together.

In October of 2018, my community was hit by hurricane Michael. My house and my community suffered lots of damage. Russell showed up at my house two days later with his daughter and a generator. He brought his daughter to teach her about the devastation that is caused by natural disasters, and the generator they brought powered my house, allowing 30 people to shower there for weeks. When he left, he sent his personal tractor to my house and left it there for a month for my family and the local community to use it to remove fallen trees.

I could go on and on with stories about his kindness and generosity, but the best way I can sum up Russell Laffitte is by saying he is a truly genuine southern gentleman. He loves his family, and he loves helping others. I personally ask that you show him grace during this time so that we can see Russell return to the community as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Alex Jernigan

Honorable Richard M. Gergel
United States District Judge
District of South Carolina
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Your Honor,

My name is Beth Chafin. I have worked at Palmetto State Bank in the Human Resources Department for 26 years, and I am currently serving on the Hampton Town Council. I have known Russell since kindergarten. Russell's parents took me in when my father was hospitalized with cancer, and I stayed with the family until my father passed away in 1981. Russell is like a brother to me, and I, along with the other employees at Palmetto State Bank, am devastated by what has happened. It feels as if a part of our hearts have been ripped out.

Russell went above and beyond to support and protect his employees, and he would never ask his employees to do anything that he would not do himself. Russell is extremely giving, supportive, and family-oriented, and he would take money out of his own pockets to help someone who needed it. Russell is extremely involved in the community. He served on the Disabilities Board, donated and participated in the Relay for Life Charity event, and worked through the bank to organize several fundraising events. When a tornado came through the area, Russell was the one to organize a day for bank employees to help clean up people's yards and clear away debris. Hampton will not be the same without Russell because he was so involved in this community.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Chafin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Beth Chafin

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Judge Gergel,

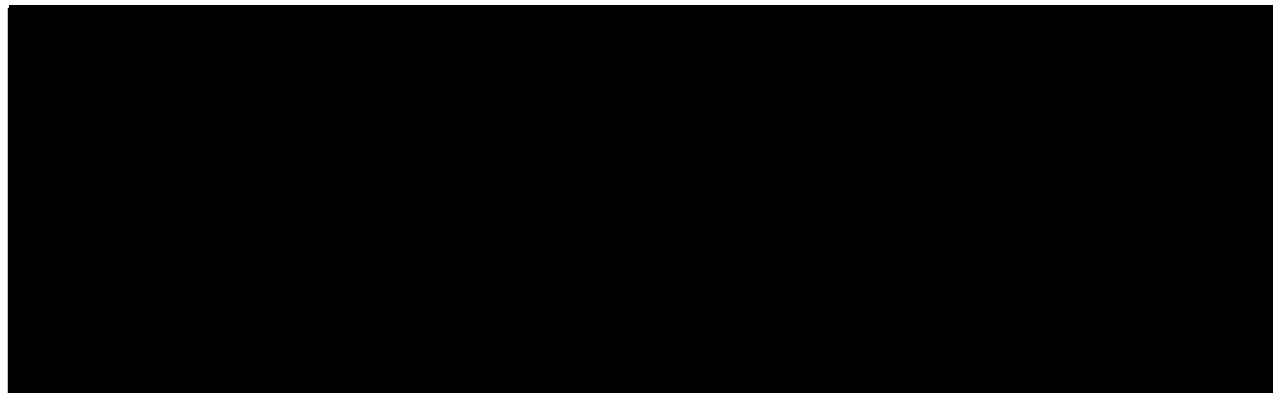
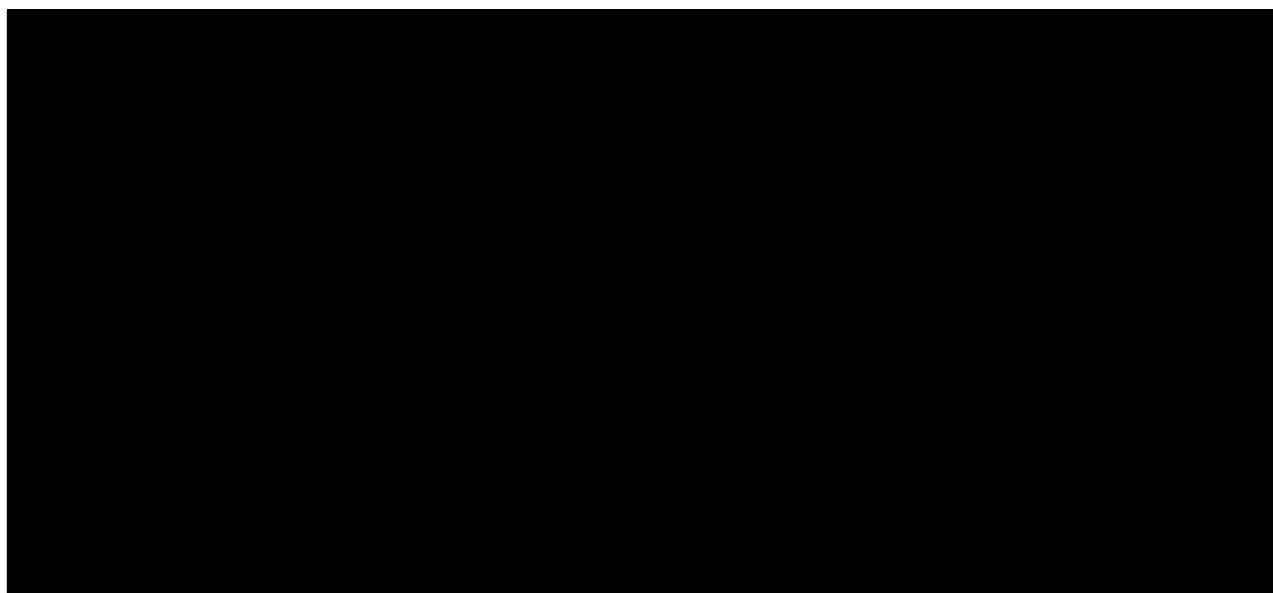
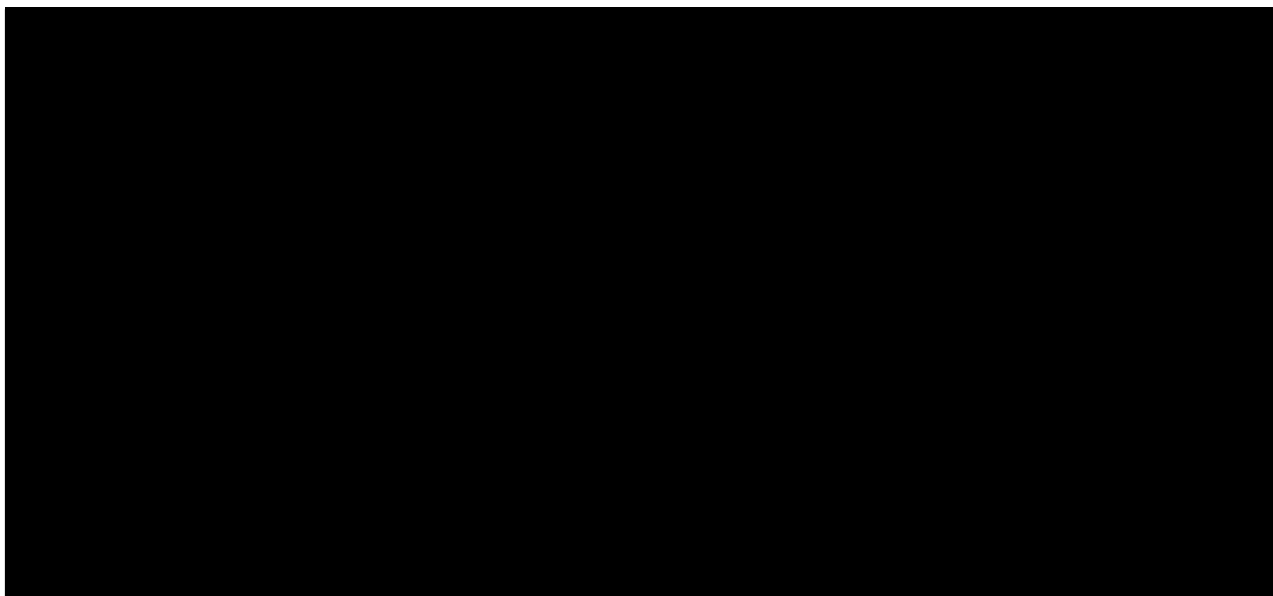
My name is Bonnie Wilson and I am writing this letter on behalf of Russell Laffitte. I have known Russell for many years as a neighbor, a friend, and a caring parent. I was the former principal at Ben Hazel Primary School while Russell's children were in attendance. There I watched his children grow into kind individuals under his guidance. He has been a very involved and caring parent, volunteering his time by working in the concession stand for the little league football program.

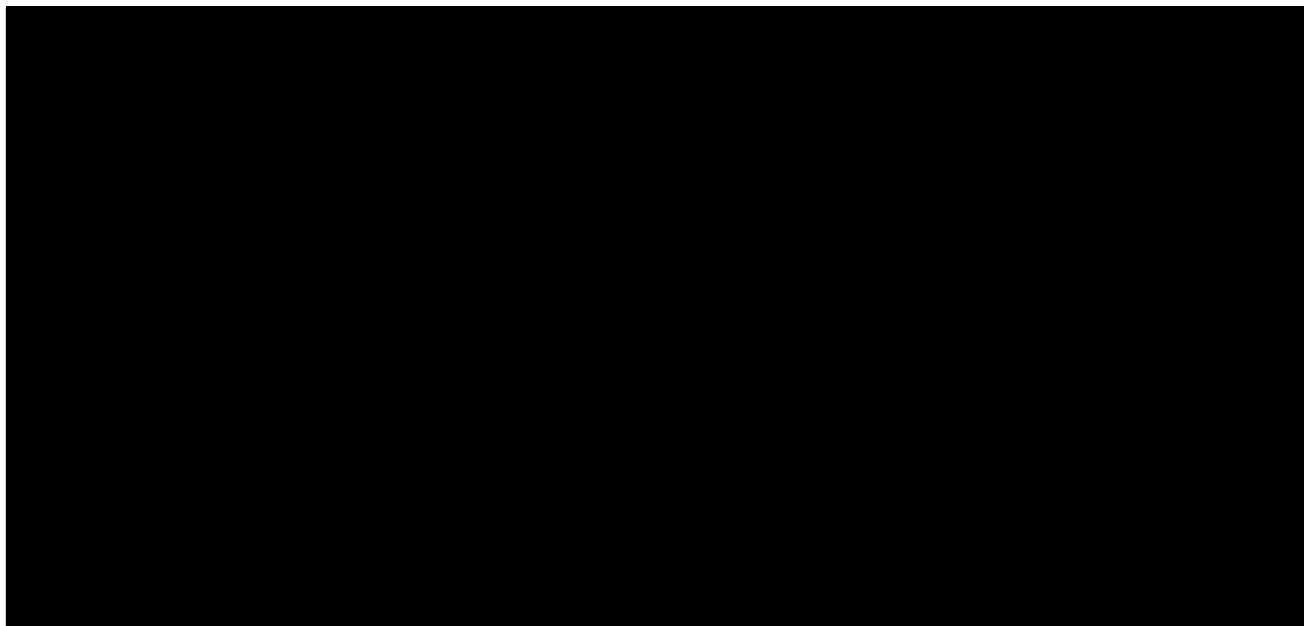
Russell has also been a generous and helpful neighbor. When Hurricane Matthew came through our community, a 95-foot tree fell onto my home and Russell personally came to my house with chainsaws to help remove the tree. His immediate reaction was to be present and helpful any way he knew how. That's the kind of person Russell is. He and his family mean very much to me. Please extend mercy as you sentence him.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bonnie Wilson".

Bonnie Wilson





Honorable Richard M. Gergel
United States District Judge
District of South Carolina
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Dear Judge Gergel:

My name is Jenks Rhodes. I am the President and CEO of Jenks Motor Company and Offroading. I have known Russell since he was a little kid, and the Laffitte's have always been close family friends. My family and I have banked with Palmetto State Bank for years, and Russell has been a long-time customer of Jenks Motor Company. In all the years of doing business with Russell, I can say that when we are doing business, it is always professional. Russell is honest and upfront, and he is someone I trust. My family and this community think the world of Russell and his family. Russell wants to help whoever he can, whenever he can, and whenever I needed anything, Russell was the person I knew I could call. If you were on the side of the road, Russell is the person who would stop and help.

Russell is a needed character and role model for Hampton. He is kind, polite, and courteous—the perfect person. Owning a business, I deal with a tremendous amount of people, and Russell is one of the best.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenks Rhodes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jenks" being more prominent and the last name "Rhodes" following in a similar style.

Jenks Rhodes

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Dear Judge R. Gergel,

My name is Jim Nix, and I am writing this letter on behalf of Russell Laffitte. I have known Russel since high school, and we have been friends for roughly twenty years now. I would consider Russell one of my best friends, and my kids call him Uncle Russell. He is an outstanding, generous person. He would give the shirt off of his back to help anyone in need. He consistently devoted his time to the community and to helping others. The people who cross paths with Russell walk away with only good things to say about him. Russell is just an all-around good guy. His absence will be felt in our community, and we hope for his quick return.

With Respect,



Jim Nix

Honorable Richard M. Gergel
United States District Judge
District of South Carolina
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Your Honor, Richard M Gergel:

My name is Joseph Seckinger. I am a forester for Collum's Lumber in Allendale, and I own my own logging business, Seckinger Forest Products. I am Russell Laffitte's brother-in-law. I have known Russell since high school, and I am very lucky to call him my friend and family. When my father passed away, it was important to me that I look after my mother and my sister, and Russell has helped me carry that load by being a great husband to my sister and a great father to their children—my niece and nephew.

Russell's work through Palmetto State Bank has helped the forestry and lumber business in Hampton, and he is someone who understands the business and is willing to work with people. The forestry and lumber business is difficult to get into. Large banks will not invest in small businesses trying to make a start in the industry because they don't understand the business, and most forestry and lumber companies are handed down. Russell has helped many new companies form, and he helped a young man get into the business when an older forestry company closed. This would have been impossible if not for Russell and his work at Palmetto State Bank.

Russell is fair and honest, and even though he wants to help as many people as he can, he will also tell you if he could not do something. Russell understands farming, logging, forestry, and the importance of small business. His son is attending school to go

into forestry as well, and I hope that Russell can be there to see his son graduate and enter the business. Russell's absence will be an incredible loss for Hampton and for our family.

With respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Seckinger', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Joseph Seckinger

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Your Honor,

My name is Juanita Woods, and I am writing this behalf on Russell Laffitte. I have known Russell since he was very young. My mother worked for the Laffitte family for close to 40 years and Russell considered her his "second mother". I have also done work for the Laffittes for 11 years.

Russell is a nice, kind, and friendly person who would not hesitate to do anyone a favor if he could. He is an honest and trusting person. He is thought of highly in the community and dearly loved by me and my family. He treated my mother as he would his own and I cannot think of a better representation of a respectful, kind nature than that.

When he was getting married, he bought my mom a nice outfit for the wedding (a two-piece skirt and jacket set). He did not know it, but my mother would generally never wear a skirt. However, she surely wore that one with a smile. We laugh to this day about it because Russell is the only person who has ever been able to get her to wear a skirt. Behind this story is a strong and caring relationship between my family and Russell that has enriched all our lives.

He means so much to me and I ask that the court please show mercy on him.

Sincerely,

Juanita Woods

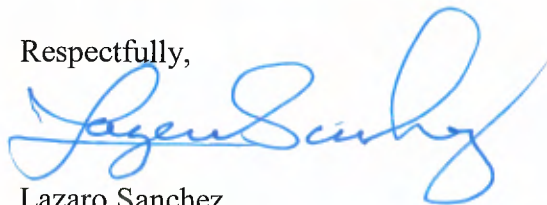


Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Your Honor, Judge Gergel:

My name is Lazaro Sanchez and I am writing this letter on behalf of Russell Laffitte. I have known Russell for twenty-five years. My family leases land nearby Russell's home in Estill and we are grateful to have found such a kind neighbor in him. Our families get together about fifteen or twenty times a year, always for Thanksgiving, and enjoy one another's company, even hunting together some. My family and I actually live in Miami so we are not always around to check on our land in Estill. Russell has always offered to check on things for us and even offered to mow the grass for us and other helpful things like that. He even calls in the winter to make sure we have the pipes covered so they don't freeze and burst. I've always known Russell to be a good and kind person. I would respectfully ask the court to show him mercy. He means so much to my family.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lazaro Sanchez", is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lazaro Sanchez

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Dear Judge Gergel,

My name is Lee Ellis. Russell and I worked next door to each other, which led to us seeing each other daily in a professional capacity, but we would also see each other weekly in a personal capacity as Russell is one of my best and closest friends.

Russell is a man who is devoted to his friends, his family, and his community. He was always doing something good for the community. He worked on several boards and supported the local and private schools. Our local rotary club has a yearly cook-in, and he helped buy a grill for the club.

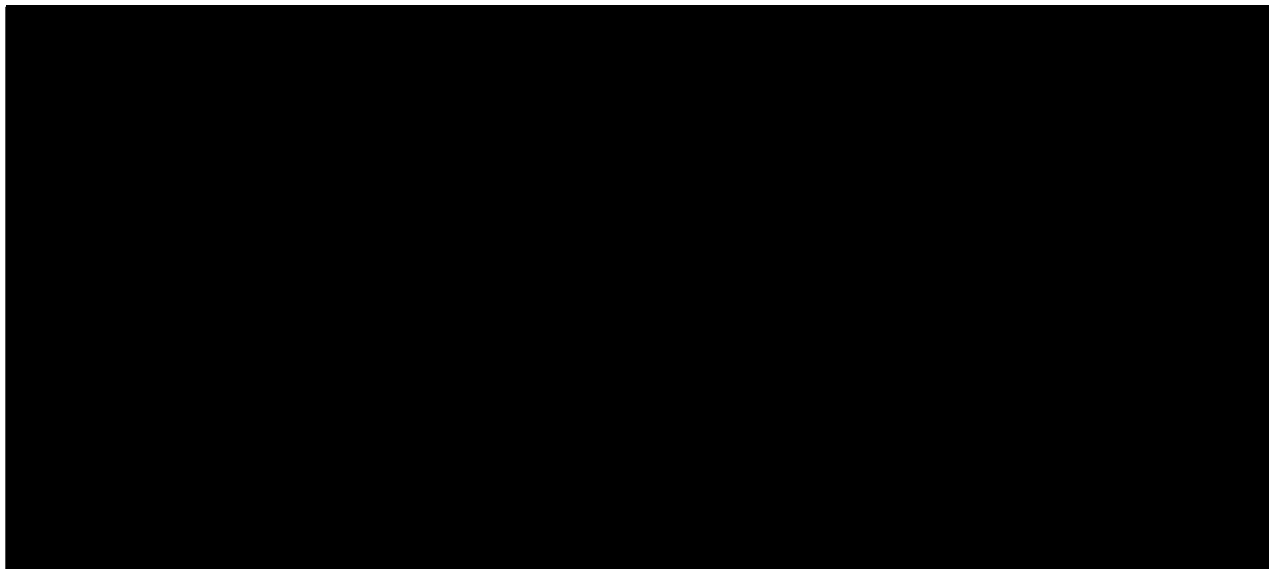
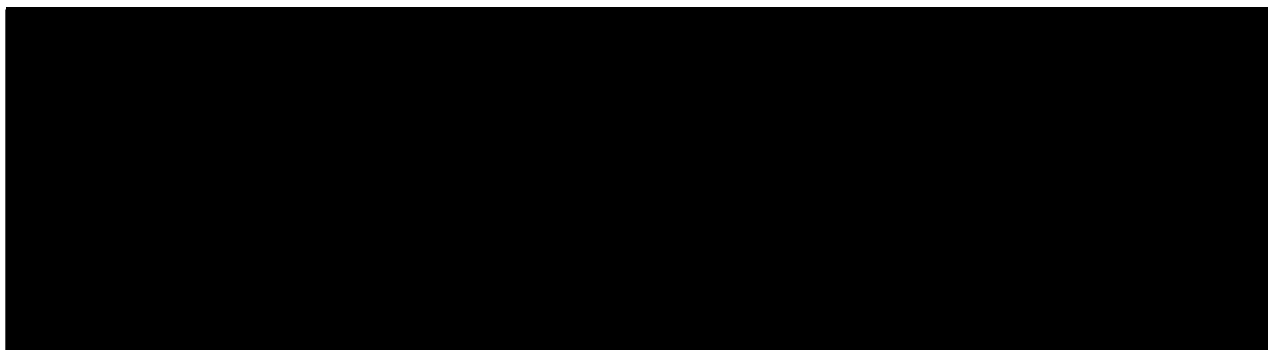
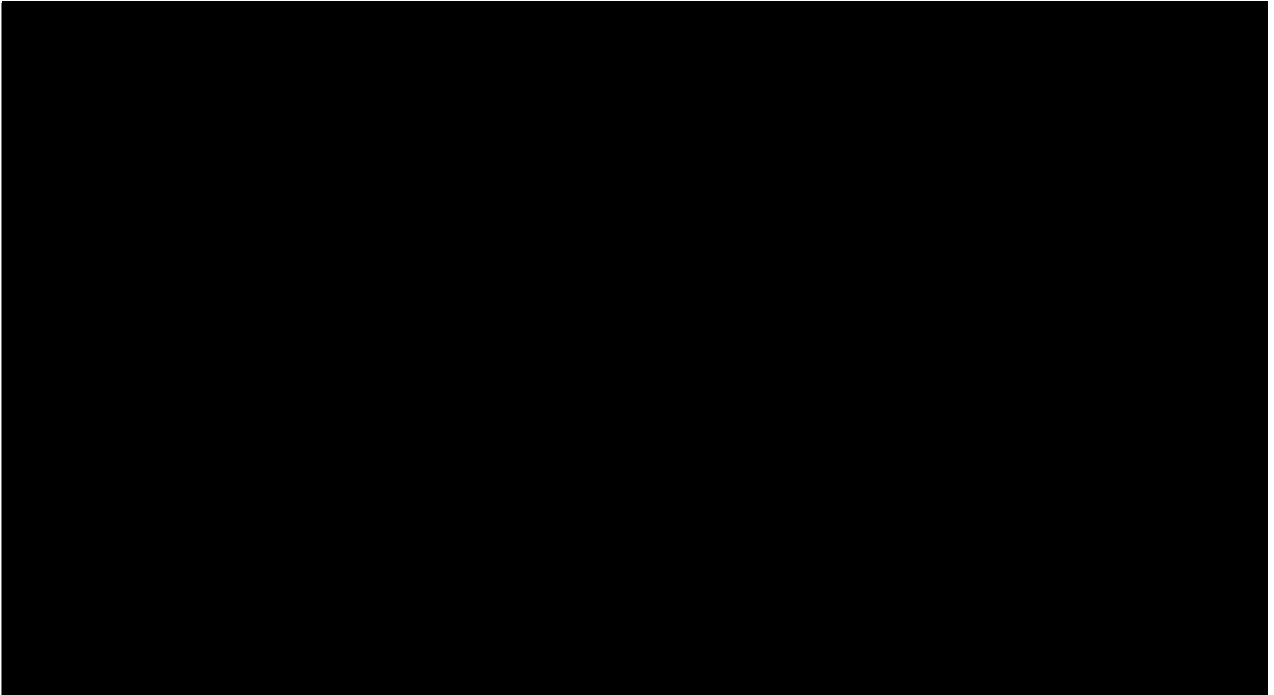
I would consider Russell to be a brother of mine. He means the world to me. Please consider all who will be at a loss in his absence and extend him mercy on our behalf.

Sincerely,



Lee Ellis

Owner
Ellis REALTY & INSURANCE AGENCY
701 1ST ST W
HAMPTON, SC 29924



Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Your Honor:

My name is Maribel Sanchez and I am writing this letter on behalf of Russell Laffitte. Over the past twenty-five years I have known Russell to be a humble, friendly, and family-oriented man, always willing to help others out. We own property next to him in Estill but actually live in Miami. Russell has always been an attentive and kind neighbor, going above and beyond to check on our place in Estill when we are not there. He treats all his neighbors kindly. I know Russell spends a lot of time helping a woman just down the street from our Estill property who lost her husband and needs assistance keeping her property mowed and maintained. Russell stepped in without being asked to help her any way he can. He feels like family to the people who know him. I ask for your grace on Russell's behalf.

Best,


Maribel Sanchez

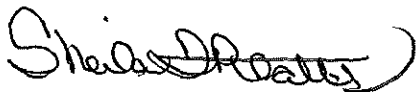
The Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Your Honor, Richard M. Gergel,

My name is Sheila Platts. I am writing this letter on behalf of Russell Laffitte. I met Russell in high school and right away recognized him as a gentleman. He and his wife are very dear friends who have raised two outstanding children. I know Russell to be a trustworthy, honorable, fair, and genuine person who has a true desire to help people. He is committed to supporting others and carries this commitment into his relationships with his family, friends, and his community.

Over the course of many years, Russell has supported Relay for Life functions and its goals in our community. He has been a steady volunteer, helping meet the needs of community schools as well as recreational sports. Russell is the kind of man who is, and has always, been willing to lend a helping hand. He seeks out opportunities to do so and has made a positive impact on his community as a result. Please, have mercy on him.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila Platts", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Sheila T. Platts

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Judge Richard M. Gergel,

My name is Terry Jarrell. I have known Russell since high school, and we reconnected after college when I started farming his father's land twenty years ago. Russell is an outstanding man who has been a very good friend to me and my family. He never harbors ill-will towards anyone and always goes out of his way to offer a helping hand to anyone when he can. Whenever I needed help with the farm, I was always able to call Russell, and he was always there. I have been able to depend on and trust him throughout our friendship.

When my father was going through his cancer surgeries and treatments, Russell went out of his way and dedicated his time to helping on the farm if we got behind. It really meant a lot to my family that we were able to focus on Dad's health and not worry about the pending harvest. We wouldn't have been able to accomplish what was done without Russell's help. Russell is a man of integrity who shows love and loyalty for his family and friends. I ask that you would show him compassion so he can be home soon.

Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Jarrell", written in a cursive style.

Terry Jarrell

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Your Honor, Judge Richard Gergel:

My name is Tony Tamayo, and Russell is one of my neighbors in South Carolina. I have known him for five or six years now. Russell is one of the nicest people I have ever met. He is soft spoken, the type of person to do anything for you.

Throughout the time that I have known Russell, he has been nothing but a great friend to me. He and my wife both love to read, and they constantly share books back and forth with us. We have gone on hunting trips together and had dinner with each other's families throughout the years. I live in Miami, but I own property in South Carolina, and Russell has always gone out of his way to keep an eye on my property while I am away. He has even helped clean up debris after major storms when I have been away. I can think of only positive things to describe Russell Laffitte.

With humility,



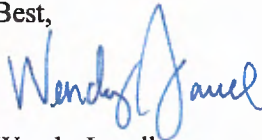
Tony Tamayo

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Judge Richard Gergel:

My name is Wendy Jarrell. I am writing this letter on behalf of Russell Laffitte. I met Russell more than twenty years ago where I got to know him as a professional and a friend. He is a kind, generous person who has been both a friend to me and also a pillar in the community. He has consistently devoted himself to making the community better by serving with his time and efforts to make the community a place where people feel safe and proud to live. He is also a devoted family man who loves his parents, wife, and children deeply. I sincerely hope the court extends mercy and grace to him.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy Jarrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

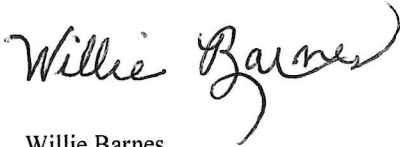
Wendy Jarrell

Honorable Richard M. Gergel
United States District Judge
District of South Carolina
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Your Honor,

My name is Willie Barnes. I have known Russell Laffitte my entire life. I have also done work professionally, as an interior decorator, for Palmetto State Bank and for his family members. Russell has always been fair, professional, and kind. His absence will be devastating not only to the lives of his family but also to the community. He was very giving. Russell helped me during a troubling time in my life when I was going through a separation from my partner of 32 years. Russell stepped in and stopped me from being harmed by someone else's bad actions. Russell has always been good and good for the community. Russell was a lifeline to all in the community and would always step up to the plate to help people in any way he could. I am thankful for Russell's presence in my life and in the community and ask that you show him compassion so he can return to helping those of us that have come to rely on him.

Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Willie Barnes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Willie" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and "Barnes" follows in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

Willie Barnes

Honorable Richard M. Gergel
United States District Judge
District of South Carolina
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Dear Judge Gergel,

My name is Wyman Maner, and I am a professional surveyor in Hampton, SC. I have known Russell Laffitte since I was a child, and he has always been a close family friend, hunting buddy, and banker who I could trust with my business. As a friend of Russell's and a business owner in Hampton, I have always known Russell to be an outstanding individual who is honest, caring, and giving.

Russell cares deeply about Hampton. He was always eager to donate to charities, involve the bank in fundraising events like the Relay for Life, and help community members in need in any way that he was able to. There are very few people who have given as much of their time and care to the Hampton community, and Hampton will not be the same without Russell.

Russell is a dedicated son and a loving father and husband. I am heartbroken and devastated over this trial and what this means for Russell, his family, and Hampton as a whole. I ask that you have mercy on Russell when you make your decision.

Sincerely,



Wyman Maner

Honorable Richard M. Gergel
United States District Judge
District of South Carolina
85 Broad Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

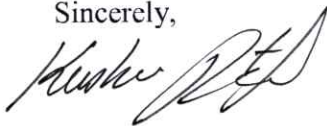
Dear Judge Gergel:

My name is Kash Patel, and I am writing this letter on behalf of Russell Laffitte.

I met Russell shortly after my family and I moved to Hampton in 2010. As an entrepreneur and business owner, I opened an account at Palmetto State Bank and quickly got to know Russell by applying for loans for my businesses. Our business connection quickly became a friendship. Russell was the person to always say hello or to stop by with his family. He even came to the baby shower my wife and I hosted. Trust is everything to Russell, and I trust him as a professional and as a friend. When I thought about relocating my family from Hampton a few years ago, it was Russell who I spoke to and who inspired me to continue growing my businesses and my family in Hampton. I trusted him with this advice because of the professional care he had shown towards my businesses and the personal care he had shown to me and my family.

Russell is a good person who cares about the people, the community, and the small businesses in Hampton. Russell and Palmetto State Bank often hosted fundraisers and are often the biggest sponsors for charity events hosted in Hampton. Their absence from this community will be felt deeply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kash Patel', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kash Patel

Virginia Harper Breen
108 East 82nd Street, Apartment 3A
New York, New York 10028

July 27, 2023

Honorable Richard Mark Gergel
United States District Judge
85 Broad Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Dear Judge Gergel:

My name is Virginia Harper Breen, and I am writing to you today on behalf of Russell Laffitte. I grew up in Estill, a neighboring town of Hampton, and as is typical in so many rural counties of South Carolina, everyone tends to know each other. Russell has always been a family friend – our fathers and grandfathers did business together – but it wasn't until my father passed away suddenly in 2017 that I really got to know Russell well on a personal level. When my brother and I were dealing with the shocking and tragic death of my father, Russell was there to help us personally and as a banker dealing with the financial complexities of continue to run our father's timber business.

Russell is hard-working, community-minded, and honest. He is marked by a spirit of generosity, and in our conversations, he was constantly thinking of ways in which he could help others in the Hampton community. Shortly after the government announced the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) in the early days of the pandemic, I saw Russell, who had been working around the clock for weeks processing PPP loans and calling customers to make sure they were aware of their eligibility for a forgivable government loan. He told me that the bank made practically nothing on the loans, but he wanted to make sure customers had all of the aid they could

get to stay afloat in such a difficult business environment. This is just one example of when Russell put others before himself.

As a friend, I know Russell to be family man and a man who loves Hampton. He is an attentive and loyal son to his aging parents, he beams with pride when he speaks of his daughters and wife, and he sees hope and promise for the future of Hampton County. In my opinion, Russell Laffitte is a good man, and I urge you to consider leniency in your sentencing decision.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Virginia Harper Breen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Virginia Harper Breen